

**The University of Findlay
College of Liberal Arts
Fall Semester 2005
Jewish and Christian Traditions:
Text, Film, and Testimony**

*The Mission of the University is to equip our students
for meaningful lives and productive careers.*

Course Number/Title: Reli 230.01

Credit Hours: 3

Class Time/Place: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00a.m-12:15 p.m.

Prerequisites: none

Instructor: Louis Stulman, 313 Old Main, extension 6988

Office Hours: Wednesday 8:00-11:00 a.m. 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Course Description

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS GE/LAD

An introduction to the Jewish and Christian traditions, their history, central teachings and practices, as well as their distinctive and shared values. The course also examines Jewish-Christian dialogue in the post-Holocaust world.

**Relationship to the
Conceptual
Framework**

Reli 230.01 is a humanities course in the tradition of liberal arts education. Students will thus demonstrate competency in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking carefully, clearly, and effectively about issues which matter deeply to all peoples and cultures: life and death, rites of passage, ethical reflection and action, relationships between self and society, faith and transcendence, and human destinies.

Classroom

WTS 251

Course Objectives

The goal of Reli 230.01 is to introduce students to Judaism and Christianity. Special attention is given to their central teachings and practices, as well as their dominant symbol and value systems. As a secondary goal, the course explores ways in which the Judeo-Christian tradition has shaped so-called Western culture. In order to achieve these goals the student will be expected to demonstrate

1. an understanding of the characteristic features of Judaism and Christianity including their similarities and differences;
2. an understanding of major beliefs and practices of Jews and Christians
3. an understanding of the influence of the Hebrew and Christian Bible(s) on Jews, Christians, and contemporary Western society
4. an understanding of the relationship of certain ethical issues to the Judeo-Christian tradition

General Education Learning Outcomes Addressed

Goal 1. Students will take courses which expose them to a range of basic religious beliefs and diverse ethical perspectives and which encourage them to develop their own perspectives on global issues.	XX
Goal 2. Students will become familiar with the historical, scientific, literary, and/or philosophical content of a range of disciplines.	
Goal 3. Students will acquire and practice skills for reading, writing, speaking, listening, abstract inquiry, critical thinking, logical reasoning, and using computers and related technology.	XX
Goal 4. Students will develop an appreciation for and means of analyzing art, literature, music, communication, science, and/or theatre.	XX
Goal 5. Throughout their general education experience, students will analyze and reflect upon the challenges facing our global society as well as the importance of being a life-long learner and responsible citizen.	XX

Required Textbooks and other materials

Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out*

Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Judaism*

Philip Cunningham, *The Story of Judaism*

Robert Schoen, *What I Wish My Christian Friends Knew about Judaism*

The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Oxford, 2001); this particular translation is optional; any modern translation is adequate

Knowledge Base

<http://www.jewfaq.org/index.htm>

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~jtreat/rs/resources.html>

<http://www.christiancentury.org/>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/>

<http://www.sbl-site.org/>

<http://www.sojo.net/>

See also assigned readings by Henri Nouwen, Chaim Potok et al.

Instructional Strategies

Case Analysis	X	Library and Internet Research	X
Debate	X	Practice/drill	
Discovery/Independent Research	X	Problem solving	
Discussion/Questioning/Interviewing		Reading assignments	X
Experiential Learning		Role playing/simulation games	
Field Experience	X	Service Learning	
Group Presentation		Video/Audio Review and Critique	
Laboratory Experiences		Individual Presentation	X
Lecture	X		

Methods of Assessment

Abstracts		Participation	X
Attendance	X	Peer Evaluation	
Capstone Project		Portfolio	
Case Study		Portfolio Lab Performance	
Exams	X	Presentations	X
Group Projects		Professional Evaluation	
Homework Assignments	X	Quizzes	
Internet Research		Research project	
Journaling		Other	
Lab Performance			
Oral/written review of literature	X		

Course Requirements Course Requirements

1. assigned readings in the textbooks and collateral material
2. written and oral assignments, and class participation
3. three tests during the semester covering the readings, lectures, films, and class discussion. There is no comprehensive final exam in the class!
4. three two/three-page critiques of the textbooks and films
5. **attendance is required.** See also policy in recent University catalog as well.

Grading

1. 60% if the grade is based on the three tests (evenly distributed)
2. 20% of the grade is based on the oral and written class work
3. 20% of the grade is based on the reviews/critiques of the textbooks and films.

Grading Scale/Distribution

A= 100-90, B=89-80, C=70-70, D=69-60, F=below 60

Honor Code

I will not knowingly engage in any dishonorable behavior, cheat, steal, lie or commit any act of plagiarism during my academic work, course, or endeavor. If I observe an act which I believe violates the University's Honor Code, I may, in my discretion, report it to the appropriate personnel.

Course Policies and Practices

Make-up exams will be given only in extenuating circumstances and only if the instructor is contacted PRIOR to the time of exam and with the signature of the Dean/Vice President of Academic Affairs; Attendance is required. Non-attendance of three or more classes will lead to an automatic reduction of one letter grade. See also policy in recent University catalog as well.

Final Exam Date

Final Exam date: Wednesday, December 14 @ 8:00-9:50 a.m.

Special Services

If you are a student with a disability, it is your responsibility to register with the Office of Disability Service and notify your instructor one week prior to any needed service so that reasonable accommodations can be made for you.

Additional Information

Note about religion classes: Although the religious studies classes offered at the University of Findlay are equal to other areas of study in terms of rigor and objectivity, they are nonetheless distinctive in several important aspects. A religion class is more than a course of study to be mastered—with competition, grades and rewards. The main questions of religion—Who am I, Where have I come from? Where am I going? Does life hold meaning and value? How should I live?—are questions that transcend the confines of any classroom and lead us deeper into the “unspeakable mystery of existence” (Nouwen). Therefore, the present course is not one in which you can passively absorb the instructor’s comments and then simply regurgitate them to the instructor on tests. Students are encouraged and expected to participate by intellectually struggling with the complex issues of “meaning.” Thus, although the approach of Rel 230.01 is historical and literary in orientation, it is nonetheless profoundly “religious” (albeit not in a sectarian manner).

Tentative Class Schedule

(Course outline is subject to change throughout the semester)

Units 1-6 (each unit represents 2 ½ hours or one week of course work):

“Great Ideas” in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament

Readings:

Biblical passages as assigned in the Torah and Prophets, and the Writings
Assigned readings in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Judaism*; Philip Cunningham, *The Story of Judaism*

Topics:

1. Overview of course
2. What is religion/spirituality? “*Tuesdays with Morrie*”
3. Judaism and Christianity: An Introduction
4. The Old Testament/Hebrew Bible: The roots of both traditions
5. Major Teachings of the Bible/“Great Ideas” of the Judaeo-Christian Tradition

Test #1

Units 7-10: Distinctive Beliefs and Practices of Judaism

Readings:

Robert Schoen, *What I Wish My Christian Friends Knew about Judaism* (**review is due by...**)

Assigned material from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and Talmud

Topics:

1. Modern Judaism and its major branches and teachings
2. The Holocaust
3. Traditional versus the Modern
4. The Chosen—in film and literature
5. Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
6. Speaker on Judaism

Test #2

Units 11-15: Distinctive Beliefs and Practices of Christianity

Readings:

Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (**review is due by...**)

Assigned material from the New Testament

Topics:

1. Major Teachings of Christianity—New Testament and Creeds
2. Christianity in Action: Dead Man Walking, Spitfire Grill, or Romero

3. Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out*
4. Speaker on Christianity

Test #3

If you have any problems, questions, or suggestions, **please** stop by my office or contact me by phone or through email.

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Addenda

Rel 230 Jewish and Christian Traditions
University of Findlay

Dr. Louis Stulman
Syllabus Addendum 1

When we watch C. Potok's *The Chosen* in class, please be attentive to the following matters in your reading:

1. character, setting, and plot
2. Potok's use of the "eye" as a metaphor
3. the conflict and eventual friendship between Reuven and Danny (why does Denny "hate" Reuven at first sight?)
4. tensions between inherited networks of meanings/beliefs and new, conflicting value systems; that is, the differences between modern and traditional forms of religious faith; how does one live a life of faith in the modern, secular world?
5. insights into Judaism
6. differences between the film and the novel
7. particular words that you don't understand

We will likely watch the highly acclaimed film “Dead Man Walking.” The film raises poignant questions about capital punishment from a religious point of view. “Dead Man Walking” is based on the book, by the same title, written by Helen Prejean. In it Sister Helen described her experiences and insights as she ministered with men facing execution, and then with the families of murder victims. The film allows audiences to see the reality of murder and of punishment from the viewpoints of the accused, their families, and the families of the victims.

After you’ve seen the film and read the attached reviews, **please prepare for class by addressing the following questions.**

Initial Reactions and Feelings

(Questions come from printed study guide [no copyright])

1. “Dead Man Walking” is a very powerful film. What were some of the feelings and reactions you had while viewing it? How did the film affect you?

About the Film

2. What changes did you see taking place in Matthew Poncelet during the film? What brought about these changes?
3. What new information about the death penalty did you learn in viewing the film?
4. What new understanding about the experiences and needs of murder victims’ families did you gain in watching the film?

Religious Perspectives

5. Critics have praised this film for the authentic goodness of its main character. In what ways is Helen Prejean a role model for persons of faith who are concerned about justice issues?
6. Mr. Percy, Hope’s father, says, “Matthew Poncelet is God’s mistake!” Would you agree? What causes human beings, created by God, to commit such inhuman acts as rape and murder?

Jewish Perspectives

7. The concept of equal retribution—“Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Deuteronomy 19:21)—was actually given in order to control the all-out vengeance that had taken place up to that time. Rather than prescribing that retribution ought to take place, it **limits** the response to no more than the original offense. Does this awareness make a difference in the way you would apply this well-known passage from the Bible to modern-day capital punishment?

Christian Perspectives

8. If a murderer asks for forgiveness, does God forgive, in your opinion? Should we? If we do forgive, what impact does our forgiveness have on the kind of sentence we feel is appropriate for that person?
9. How does Jesus of Nazareth’s execution as a criminal affect our understanding of capital punishment from a Christian perspective?
10. What is the difference between forgiving and forgetting?

About the Issues Raised

11. Were your beliefs regarding capital punishment changed by watching this film? If so, how?
12. Did you find yourself supporting Matthew Poncelet’s execution, or hoping that his life would be spared? If he had been an Hispanic or African American whose trial was tainted by racism, how would that have affected your beliefs about the rightness of his sentence?
13. Do you believe victims’ families should have a role or a voice in the determination of sentence in a capital case, or in the clemency process? Why or why not?

Excerpts from *Tuesdays With Morrie* by Mitch Albom

Words of Wisdom From Morrie Schwartz

When all this started, I asked myself, 'Am I going to withdraw from the world, like most people do, or am I going to live?' I decided I'm going to live--or at least try to live--the way I want, with dignity, with courage, with humor, with composure. There are some mornings when I cry and cry and mourn for myself. Some mornings, I'm so angry and bitter. But it doesn't last too long. Then I get up and say, 'I want to live...'

People see me as a bridge. I'm not as alive as I used to be, but I'm not yet dead. I'm sort of...in-between. I'm on the last great journey here--and people want me to tell them what to pack.

The culture we have does not make people feel good about themselves. And you have to be strong enough to say if the culture doesn't work, don't buy it.

The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.

The most important thing in life is to learn how to give out love, and to let it come in.

If you are ever going to have other people trust you, you must feel that you can trust them, too--even when you're in the dark. Even when you're falling.

Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live.

As you grow, you learn more. If you stayed at twenty-two, you'd always be as ignorant as you were at twenty-two. Aging is not just decay, you know. It's growth. It's more than the negative that you're going to die, it's also the positive that you understand you're going to die, and that you live a better life because of it.

You have to find what's good and true and beautiful in your life as it is now. Looking back makes you competitive. And age is not a competitive issue.

Do the kind of things that come from the heart. When you do, you won't be dissatisfied, you won't be envious, you won't be longing for somebody else's things. On the contrary, you'll be overwhelmed with what comes back.

Love is how you stay alive, even after you are gone.

Invest in the human family. Invest in people. Build a little community of those you love and who love you.

In the beginning of life, when we are infants, we need others to survive, right? And at the end of life, when you get like me, you need others to survive, right? But here's the secret: in between, we need others as well.

Forgive yourself before you die. Then forgive others.

As long as we can love each other, and remember the feeling of love we had, we can die without ever really going away. All the love you created is still there. All the memories are still there. You live on--in the hearts of everyone you have touched and nurtured while you were here.

Death ends a life, not a relationship.

Questions (Please prepare a two-page typed essay)

1. Is the film "Tuesdays with Morrie" a religious/spiritual film? Explain your reply.
2. Define "religious" and/or "spiritual." Can the two terms be used interchangeably? Explain
3. What did you find most interesting and/or disturbing in the film.
4. Morrie talks a great deal about spirituality and meaning in life. What do you think are the big questions of life? Are you actively searching and curious about spirituality and the meaning of life? Explain!
5. Have you had any mentors? If so, who and why?